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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TFIZ01: DART ASSESSMENT OF AL ANBAR

SUMMARY

¶11. Between 26 and 29 April, DART Field Team West traveled more than 1,400 km inside Iraq conducting an assessment of communities in the western governorate of Al Anbar. The DART conducted assessments in Ar Rutbah, Hadithah, Anah, and Heet. The DART also stopped in Baghdad to talk with some community members. Due to security concerns, the DART was unable to assess either Ar Ramadi, the governorate's largest population center, or the community of Al Qa'im, on the Syrian border.

¶12. In general, the DART found conditions in the communities assessed to be near pre-war levels in the areas of water and sanitation, food, and health. The exception remains Ar Rutbah, although problems there could be addressed for the immediate term with a few targeted interventions. The DART has already begun working with cooperative agreement partners to design appropriate interventions. End Summary.

HEALTH

¶13. With the exception of Ar Rutbah, health facilities in communities assessed were functioning close to pre-war levels. Staff have returned to work (in some cases never leaving), facilities were undamaged and protected from looting by the communities, and supplies of emergency medical supplies are sufficient for the near-term. These facilities will require re-supply within the coming 30 days.

¶14. Ar Rutbah is the exception to this. The hospital in Ar Rutbah was destroyed by Coalition bombing. Health services are now being offered in the town's primary health clinic, but this space is inadequate to provide the level of service previously offered in this remote region's only hospital. The DART is working with World Vision International to design a short-term intervention to address this need.

FOOD

¶15. The DART found that the public distribution system (PDS) is functioning and wakils (PDS agents) are present and working in all communities assessed. All wakils had their beneficiary lists intact. Food stocks are considered adequate, and in some towns food deliveries from Ar Ramadi and ration distributions have resumed. Markets were open in all towns visited. Vegetables, meats, and starches are generally available. The DART visited one flour mill that is fully operational. The mill manager informed team that all four mills in Al Anbar are operating at pre-war levels.

WATER AND SANITATION

¶16. With the exception of Ar Rutbah, water and sewage service in all communities assessed has returned to pre-war levels. Even in Ar Rutbah, where most residents rely on septic tanks, sewage services have returned to pre-war levels.

¶17. In Ar Rutbah, normal water-in-house service has yet to be restored. Water is being tankered to residences from deep water wells approximately 15 kilometers (KM) from town. This water is not being treated prior to distribution.

Again, immediate emergency needs in water could be addressed in the short-term by a few targeted interventions. The DART has begun discussions with CARE to potentially design an intervention to address immediate water needs.

SECURITY

¶ 18. One of the primary concerns of residents in Al Anbar remains security. In fact, the lack of security prevented the DART from visiting Al Qa'im and Ar Ramadi. DART departed the village of Anah before completing its assessment due to security concerns.

¶ 19. Police have resumed work in all of the towns assessed; however, their presence is low and their ability to maintain law and order appears minimal. Local residents reported that they continue to feel unsafe. Things appear more stable where there is a Coalition presence such as in Ar Rutbah and Hadithah. The DART also found that many interviewees remained uncomfortable in talking to the team.

COMMUNICATIONS

¶ 10. Telephone service remains inoperable in most areas of Al Anbar. Some towns (Hadithah and Anah) have local phone service, but they cannot make calls to neighboring communities. Officials from local governorate services such as health and school officials have not been in contact with the governorate's administrative headquarters in Ar Ramadi. Schools have not re-opened despite a local willingness due in part to the lack of instruction from national or governorate level officials. Health officials are unable to communicate with Ar Ramadi. When they refer patients to Ar Ramadi for treatment, they must give instruction to ambulance drivers as they cannot speak directly to Ar Ramadi health officials. They also have no idea when their supply chain will resume, or if things will continue to function as they did in the past.

¶ 11. The lack of communication is also a concern to people that are unsure of the well-being of family members in other parts of the country. Some are looking for relatives who were in the military, and are unaware of the status of their loved ones. Others are simply hoping to make contact with family members in other parts of the country.

INFRASTRUCTURE

¶ 12. Western Iraq is served by a well-maintained road network. Highway 10 leading from the Jordanian border to Baghdad is a six-lane divided highway. Highway 12 leading northwest from near Ar Ramadi toward the Syrian border is a two-lane highway that is in good condition.

¶ 13. Coalition bombing destroyed some of the bridges on Highway 12. Detours have been cleared and all forms of vehicles are currently able to transit this corridor.

¶ 14. Coalition bombing also partially destroyed one bridge and one over-pass on Highway 10. The bridge (near Rutbah) has been reduced to one-lane traffic. No by-pass has been developed. This will become a significant problem as traffic, including the flow of oil tankers to Jordan and humanitarian relief (in particular the World Food Program), increases. The destroyed over-pass has rendered the eastbound lanes of Highway 10 impassable. No detour has been developed and the intermediate solution is two-way traffic on the normal westbound lanes for a couple of kilometers.

UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE

¶ 15. The presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO) is a significant problem in two of the communities that the DART visited. Hadithah was the site of a large Iraqi military base, and was the scene of a major battle between Coalition and Iraqi forces. As a result, the area is strewn with UXOs, weapons, and other military equipment. Coalition forces in the area have been active in locating and destroying UXOs, weapons, and equipment. Nevertheless, this remains a problem that will exist for some time. As of 28 April, four people had been injured as a result of UXOs in the town.

¶ 16. Ar Rutbah has a similar problem. The Iraqi military abandoned stocks of UXOs, and Coalition military action left more UXOs scattered about the town. The current Coalition presence is not equipped to address the UXO problem in Ar

Rutbah. To date, 12 individuals have been seriously injured in incidents involving UXOs in the town. U.N. Mine Action Service has visited Ar Rutbah and has plans to return. In addition, the Coalition forces present in Ar Rutbah have requested an ordnance disposal team, but there is no firm date for the arrival of such a team. Team West is working with World Vision to incorporate UXO awareness and education activities into its future activities in Ar Rutbah.

COOKING FUEL

¶17. One consistent problem in all of the towns visited by the DART was the shortage of cooking fuel. Many residents had stockpiled propane and kerosene based on their experiences following the 1991 conflict. But those stocks are running low, and normal re-supply of fuel from Ar Ramadi and Baghdad has not resumed. In some villages residents reported that kerosene was still available in the local markets, while in others residents report that they have begun using wood and charcoal for cooking.

SCHOOLS

¶18. The DART spoke to school officials and teachers in almost all of the villages assessed. In those towns where the team did not speak directly to school officials, it did question residents about the conditions of schools. Consistently, the DART was informed that most schools were ready to reopen, that students were ready to return, and that most teachers were anxious to get started. Some teachers (Ba'ath party members) are reportedly apprehensive about returning, but remain in town.

¶19. In every case, officials and residents alike reported that they are simply awaiting instruction on what to do. They have heard rumors that schools should not open for three months (some said six months). This troubles them because most want to get back to life as normal, and having schools open would be a significant step forward in this respect. (Note: Coalition forces in Ar Rutbah are working closely with local officials to get schools open in that town. End note.) The lack of communication with officials in Ar Ramadi and Baghdad is certainly adding to the problem.

MISCELLANEOUS

¶20. A growing concern is the issue of salaries for civil servants. People are very insecure and uncertain about when and how they are going to be compensated for their work. They are being instructed to keep track of their hours as they always have so that they can be compensated when a new government is in place.

¶21. Fuel supplies (gas and diesel) are running low in these communities. It is still available (sometimes only on the black market), but prices have more than doubled in many cases. Again, there is a general sense of uncertainty surrounding when things will return to normal. For example, "when will the gas station have gas again and at what price?"

¶22. However, in some ways, life is coming back to the country. Traffic on Highway 10 is picking up in the direction of Baghdad. The line to cross the border from Jordan into Iraq is growing longer and longer. Families are moving back, cars stacked high with suitcases, extra fuel, and satellite dishes, hundreds of which are pouring into Iraq from Jordan. The DART observed several cars carrying up to ten satellite dishes on the roof as well as buses carrying several stacks of ten dishes each. The DART also saw two trucks transporting approximately 20 cars into Iraq for sale -- a sign that someone has growing confidence in security along that road.

JONES